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ABSTRACT
        A comprehensive, three-dimensional model of peer
tutoring, constructed by gathering current theories and research and
locating them on a dynamic continuum of the tutoring process, allows
researchers to break new ground in tutor research and might
eventually offer a new heuristic for training peer tutors. The first
axis in the model, the focus continuum, characterizes how the tutor
interacts with the writer and text based on person-centered,
process-centered, text-centered, and/or rule-governed approaches.
This continuum incorporates the views of those advocating mechanical
competence, style, and writing as an individual process. The second
axis locates the tutorial process along the attitudinal continuum, a
perspective based on: pedagogical style, logic, and/or instinct.
Together, these two axes comprise the focus of the tutoring
situation. The third axis, the interactional continuum, describes the
relationship that occurs during the peer tutoring process and is
based on the following conversational modes: authoritarian,
conversant (collaborative), and/or receiver (student centered).
Overall, this three-dimensional model characterizes 36 basic tutoring
types which allow for an infinite amount of variation. By identifying
locations along the continua as a point of departure, researchers can
use the model to designate roles, differentiate between concepts that
address only one or two facets of tutoring, and eventually offer a
new heuristic for training peer tutors. (JD)

The Role of Peer Tutoring:

Steps to Describing a Three-Dimensional Model

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paper presented at the

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The Role of Peer Tutoring:

Steps to Describing a Three-Dimensional Model

As long as a concept remains elusive, I have a hard time
using it to its fullest potential. I am, of course, quite
willing to try new things, to take on the ephemeral, but when I
do I somehow feel that all my energy goes to holding on to the
thing, keeping it from turning into a pumpkin before it has
taken me home.

Peer tutoring, I think, falls in this category of elusive
tools. While I encourage peer tutors, I often feel as if I'm
driving nails with whimsey. Several descriptions of peer
tutoring are available, and each seems suitable some of the
time, yet none works in all situations.

Therefore, I feel a need to clarify peer tutoring on a
multi-dimensional pattern. Peer tutoring is a useful tool for
helping writers explore the possibilities of their words (see
Clifford, or Gere and Abbott), but how can we hope to be using
any learning tool to its fullest potential when we aren't even
sure what the tool is?

An inspection of the literature dealing with peer tutoring
will lead any researcher to a rapid conclusion: consensus is
non-existant. A few suggestions from the literature show peer
tutors possess unusual characteristics.

What do peer tutors do? They converse (Bruffee, "Brooklyn
Plan"), they elevate self worth (Roderick), and/or they provide

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order and logic (Reigstad and McAndrew), depending on whom you
believe. And how do they help writers improve? They identify
weaknesses (Lorch), they cyclically give and take ideas (Kail),
and/or they serve as a social audience (Hawkins), again
depending on the source at hand. And how do these logical,
worth-elevating conversants go about cyclically identifying
weaknesses while being the audience? Simple. They either rely
on pedagogical theory (Simard) or they don't (Beck, et al);
they either employ instinct (Hartwell) or expertise (Brannon
and Knoblauch). But that is only the beginning. These
logically cyclical audience-conversants with instinctual
expertise must also simultaneously earn the writers' respect
and trust (Brostoff) while creating an atmosphere of doing
(Fishman), and bringing students to learn (Freedman). They
should also, of course, be flexible (Hurlow).

The point becomes obvious: it will never fly, Wilbur.
Faced with this bewildering assortment of contentions, most of
us have accepted some of the published theories while rejecting
others. We are, in essence, reinventing the airplane every
time we want to fly.

Many, perhaps all, of these individual airplanes navigate
quite nicely. But the parts don't interchange. Indeed, the
airplanes may not even physically resemble one another, and
when one of us starts describing her airplane, the rest of us
can't help but think of our own.

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What I am proposing, then, is a move toward a comprehensive, three-dimensional model of peer tutoring. The model will not replace current theories, but it will attempt to gather and locate each of them as points on continua which remain dynamic throughout the peer process.

The Concepts of Three-Dimensional Tutoring

Focus

We need first to establish a continuum for viewing the writing and the writer. It would have to incorporate diverse views: those which advocate mechanical competence, those which promote style, and those which emphasize writing as an individual process. If we limit our discussion to texts and writers, an axis like that in Figure A will allow us to plot a variety of approaches.

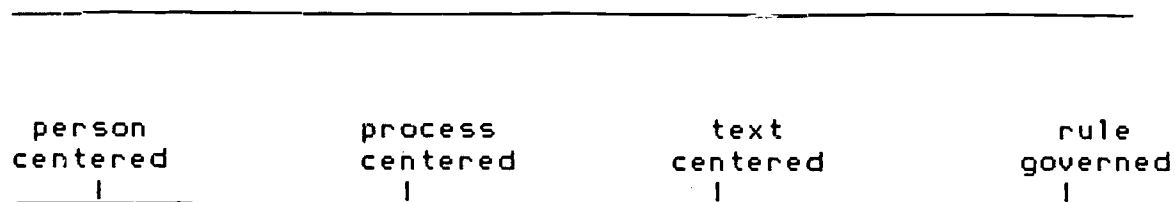| person centered	process centered	text centered	rule governed
I	I	I	I

Figure A--Focus Continuum

Kenneth Bruffee ("Peer Tutoring"), for example, generally advocates working at the Person end of the Focus Continuum, seeing learning as a social maturation process, influenced by the conversations of peer tutoring.

Others, such as Harvey Kail, tend to emphasize the process point of the continuum, believing that peer tutoring differs from traditional education by being cylcical rather than linear, by promoting recursive learning.

Still others approach the Text and Rule points. Sue Lorch, for example, claims that tutors need to be skilled in the writing process, not in social interaction, and that tutors should identify a writer's weaknesses.

A tutor might constantly float along this Focus continuum, moving from one extreme to another within a single conference. For a student with a rough draft the tutor might begin with questions of process. Later, the conversation might shift to the clarity and effectiveness of the text itself. As the session continues, it might address rules for solving comma or paragraph confusions. Finally, the conference might return to the Person-centered end of the spectrum as the tutor offers encouragement or compliments. The movement on this continuum is not necessarily progressive nor linear; a conference can recursively move within the spectrum.

Attitude

But how do we decide where to work along the Focus Continuum? Sometimes we decide based on our theoretical allegiances, most of which are manifest as a pedagogical style. Sometimes we are governed by the logic of a situation,

extrapolating direction from the writer's successes and failures. Sometimes we guess, pulling from our bag tricks which might unlock a writer's block, for example. We thus have a second axis, similar to the first, which locates the tutorial along an Attitudinal Perspective:

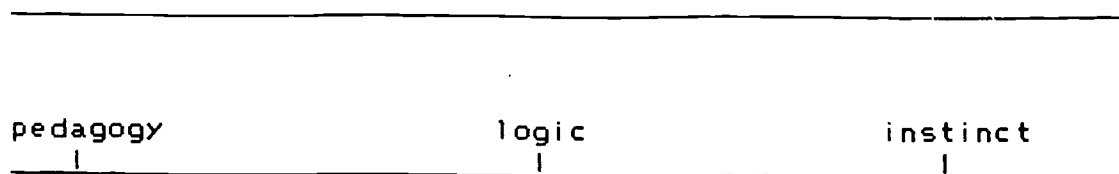pedagogy   logic   instinct

Figure B--Attitudinal Perspective

As with focus, theorists advocate each point along the axis.

Some have advocated particular pedagogical approaches. Simard, for example, specifically advocates pedagogy as equally important to personal concerns, promoting the rhetorical concepts of message senders and receivers. Brannon and Knoblauch also support a pedagogical basis for tutoring, stating there is no particular asset to tutoring unless the tutor possesses expertise and theoretical perspective.

Reigstad and McAndrew, on the other hand, emphasize that tutors provide order and logic to the conversation. Ellson also sides with an ordered, logical approach to tutoring. For tutoring to succeed, according to Ellson, the tutor needs to work from specific instructions and toward limited objectives.

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Beck, Hawkins, and Silver suggest that informality and lack of structure benefit tutoring. Emphasizing this lack of structure, Hartwell dismisses pedagogy, saying tutors should avoid being miniature English teachers, relying instead on their instincts, the opposite extreme of the spectrum.

A tutor moves along both the Focus and the Attitudinal Continua, simultaneously adjusting attitude and focus. At any given moment, for example, a tutor might choose to discuss rules of punctuation; that decision might be based on a pedagogical theory (one most know the "basics"), on logic (twelve of fifteen commas on the page are misplaced), or on instinct (the writer is tired of content questions and will leave if structure isn't stressed for a while). Similarly, working from only pedagogical theory, a tutor might decide to first address the writing process, to later discuss the text revision, and finally to explain proof reading procedures. Thus the two lines might cross at any point.

Interactional

These figures, however, remain incomplete. They diagram how we decide about and how we address the tutoring situation, but they make no mention of interaction, perhaps the most often discussed aspect of a tutoring relationship. Research in this area can help name points for the continuum.

In an enthnographic study of conference approaches used by ten professors, Reigstad identified three clearly delineated

types of conversation: tutor centered, collaborative, and
student centered.   Reigstad is careful to point out that all
three types of conference are supportive of the student
writers.   Further, students rated all three conferencing types
as being effective.

Reigstad is not the only person to identify such an
interactional continuum.   Jacobs and Karliner suggest tutors
adopt variable stances toward tutoring, depending on the
situation.   Tutors might be anything from friendly
authoritarians who direct the conversation, to fellow
conversants who participate in a conversation, to recorders who
transcri   ideas as the writer talks.

Figure C, then, is a third axis which describes these
conversational modes.

Authoritarian	Conversant	Receiver
I	I	I

Figure C--Interactional Continuum

Other theorists and researchers can, of course, be plotted
on this axis just as on the others.   Bruffee is a Conversant,
as is Kail.   Roderick and Simard, in their emphasis on message
senders and receivers, suggest that tutors should tend mainly
to be Receivers.   Lorch, by maintaining that tutors have
definite responsibilities to identify writing problems and to

guide in addressing those problems, clearly sees tutors as
Authority figures.

As discussed above with the Focus and Attitude Continua,
this Interactional Continuum could cross the intersection of
the first two at any point. Thus a tutor who has logically
chosen to focus on the writer's text might do so in a
tutor-centered, authoritarian manner (by unilaterally offering
comments and suggestions); in a collaborative, conversational
manner (by identifying a problem area and assisting the writer
in an attempt to revise); or from a student-centered, receiving
position (by expressing audience confusion and leaving the
wr.ter to clarify).

Conclusion

This model, then, is really three models sliding across
one another. In every tutoring situation the tutor, working in
collaboration with the writer and the text, adopts Focus,
Attitude, and Interaction methods. These three positions can
be plotted on each of the axes I have suggested, their
intersection being the tutoring basis at that time and for that
situation. The whole process, though, can and must remain
dynamic and kinetic. These three-dimensional models, then, can
only be descriptive and can only be so for brief moments of a
tutoring session. Figure D displays several of the
descriptions possible.
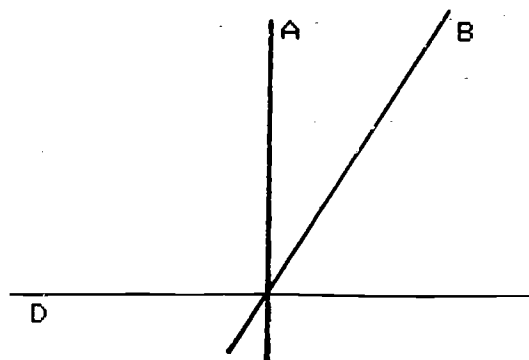
Pedagogically Rule-Governed Conversant
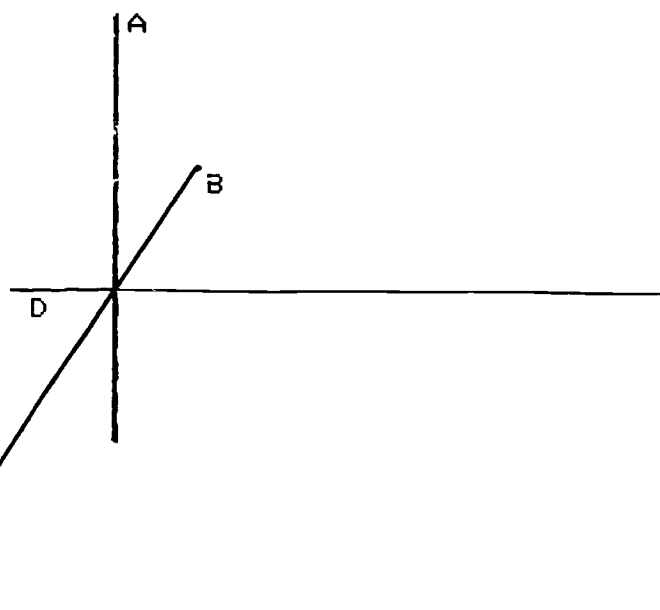
Instinctively Text-Centered Authoritarian
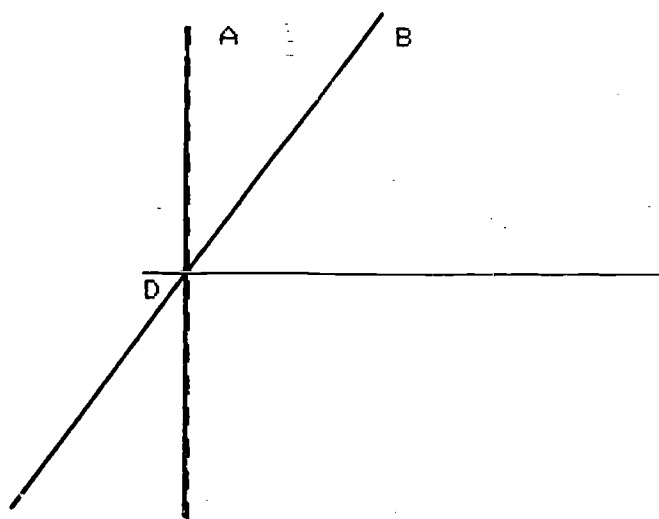
Logically Process-Centered Receiver

Figure D--Three-Dimensional Tutoring Models
        Line A represents the Focus Continuum, Line B the
        Attitudinal Perspective, and Line D the
        Interactional Continuum

By identifying locations along continua, we may finally

conduct a comprehensive discussion of peer tutoring. When we

discuss peer tutoring, we only need to designate points on each

of the continua, the intersection being our point of departure.

By combining the points I have identified on the

continuua, we can identify 36 tutoring types. Further naming

of points would allow an infinite number of types and an

infinite number of discussions. While the model does not limit

the variations, it does give us a locater system for

designating roles. It also allows us to immediately

differentiate between concepts which seek to address only one

or two facets of tutoring--such as those of Ellson which

concentrate on Logic--and those which strive for a broader

basis--such as those of Lorch which advocate Text-centered
Pedagogical Authority.

However, the majority of theories up to now have been
unilateral discussions of tutoring, plottable on only one point
of one axis. Therefore, we have been unable to work within and
develop along a common ground. When Bruffee talks
conversation, Ellson elevates logic, and Lorch identifies
weakness, the three of them are on different axes; their
discussions have no common ground. Further, much of the
literature on peer tutoring describes static, unmoving models.
These allow no room for the tutor to adjust to stimuli, between
or during sessions.

This mapping of theories will also allow us to approach
new ground in both tutor research and tutor training. Studies
could be designed which would test the boundaries of such a
three-dimensional concept, allowing us finally to expand and
contract the model based more on informational analysis and
less on theoretical concepts. And such a model, initially
constructed to describe theories and later restructured by
research, might eventually offer a new heuristic for training
peer tutors.

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